

New York City Citizen Review Panel
Thursday, September 8, 2005, 9:30 am to 10:30 am
Draft Meeting Notes

Attendance:

Mathea Rubin
Sania Metzger

Eric Brettschneider
Jocelyn Brown

David Lansner
Marion White

ACS Staff: Zeinab Chahine, Ronald Richter

OCFS Staff: Richard Nells

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy staff: Diane Mastin

Location: Manhattan Borough President's Office

Handouts: Commissioner Johnson's letter and response to panels' Annual Report

2003, 2004 Recurrence data

2003, 2004 CPS Reports by Reporter Type

2004, 2005 Removal data from ACS

Review and Analysis of Home Alone Guidelines

Suggested Guidelines for When It Is Suitable To Leave Children Home Alone

Panel letter to the Governor on Dual Track

Governor's Veto message on Dual Track

CWLA Information sheet on proposed Federal Legislation

Parents Guide to New York State Child Abuse and Neglect Laws

Strengthening California Families Through Differential Response

Minutes from July 8th meeting

Articles: AIDS Drug Trials Lead to Charges of Racism

Belated charge Sparks Furor Over Vaunted AIDS Drug Trial

Meeting was called to order at 9:35 and began with updates. Bills S5534A and S5834 (companion bills in the Assembly) allowing FBI checks on applicants for foster care and adoption will cost the state roughly \$290,000 for an estimated 18,000 finger print checks. Funds will come out of Title IV-E funding. The bills went through the legislature quickly but stopped in the codes committee of the Assembly. Some concerns have been raised regarding capacity, communications and funding. The Assembly may decide to hold a hearing and panel members will be informed if such a hearing is scheduled. The Permanency bill passed and was signed by the Governor although there were some last minute concerns raised by Domestic Violence advocates. A meeting between those advocates and the governor's office has been scheduled for next week. Provisions in the bill go into effect on December 21st.

A draft agenda was distributed for the joint panel meeting scheduled for October 14th. Panel members indicated their interest in attending the meeting.

Panel members had been emailed Commissioner Johnson's response to recommendations made in the 2004 report submitted by the panel. Discussion followed. Panel chairs asked that OCFS and ACS staff meet with them to discuss improving the annual report submitted by the panel. OCFS stood in support of the permanency bill and support for home visiting programs. They have also been concerned about disproportionality and had Greg Owens give a presentation to the panel in

2004 on the topic. These were all issues of concern to the New York City panel and part of their recommendations.

Panel members had a discussion in follow-up to the panel's decision to write the governor asking that he not support the Dual Track legislation approved in the Senate and Assembly. A concern was raised that the decision made at the July meeting represented a major policy shift and that some panel members were not present to take part in the discussion or to vote. Questions were raised about the process used in making that decision. Panel chairs stated that panel members should make every effort to attend meetings and should expect a discussion such as the one that took place at the July panel meeting in follow-up to the public hearing that the panel held. A few panel members stated why their support for Dual Track legislation had changed as a result of what they heard at the public hearing. A question was posed as to what kind of legislative reform might be needed to protect the reforms already made by ACS. Panel members agreed to discuss the issue of expungement of records.

Home Alone Guidelines were discussed, picking up the conversation where it was left at the July meeting. Panel co-chair, Eric Brettschneider, asked the panel to consider the following statement for adoption as a strategy: *The Citizen Review Panel has researched and reviewed a number of reports released by both government agencies and community organizations around the country. These reports have attempted to create regulations and/or guidelines providing families with clear and concise rules or principles to follow before choosing to leave their child home alone. It is the recommendation of the Panel that rather than the Panel issuing guidelines for leaving a child "home alone" due to the nature of the topic and the complexity of the issue, CRP believes that community-based organizations should be called upon to begin a campaign to educate their communities.*

Comments included others besides community based organizations that could play a part, the possibility of using the website to inform parents, developing a work plan that would include curriculum, and specific disagreement with the third sentence. Other comments included the need to set some guidelines for parents, that the courts are likely to fill that void if none exist and that there can be some baseline minimum to which all can agree, given that a child is not developmentally delayed or have special needs. ACS staff offered that their training for staff already includes developmental stages of children and welcome any suggestions on improvements in that training. Panel member Jocelyn Brown agreed to bring information to the next meeting about a grant with ACS to work with medical consultants that includes a component of child development. Panel members agreed that they need to seek the advice of experts and suggested a public forum with a possible date of January 2006 to receive such input.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35 so that panel members could attend the Assembly public hearing on participation in clinical trials by children in the State's care.

The next meeting is joint panel meeting scheduled for Friday, October 14 at 11:00 in Albany. The next New York City Panel meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 3rd, from 10:00 to 1:00 at the New York City United Way offices. On the agenda: Home Alone guidelines; medical records, guidelines, and use of consultants by ACS along with OCFS perspective; data, if available, from ACS on removals; and work on the recommendations to include in the panel's annual report.